

MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT

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A PHILOSOPHY OF UNITY FOR THE FUTURE BASED FIRMLY IN HISTORY

The other day a client was telling me about a "Japanese massage" they had received, and how it was different from the "regular massage" they had been used to. Another reported how sensitive their feet were during a "foot massage" they had gotten, and how it helped relieve their sinus problem. Of course, they were talking about shiatsu, traditional Swedish massage, and reflexology respectively—but to them, it was all "massage."

It also struck me how so many people trained in traditional Swedish-style massage are also picking up training in not-so-traditional Shiatsu, reflexology, Jin-shin-do, trigger point therapy, and other alternative forms of massage therapy. There seems to be a natural connection among the many forms of soft tissue therapy, and yet they are very different.

While some practitioners in the field like to distinguish their particular style as unique ("I don't do massage, I do..."), they neglect the overwhelming similarity of the work. Of course, these distinctions are important to the practitioner because they are working from differing theoretical views and varying technique.

But at this critical point in our history, it is important to band together and acknowledge the fundamental similarities of our work. If this field is to realize its full potential and emerge as an accepted health profession in the future, it needs the unity of purpose that can be achieved through a universally accepted philosophy.

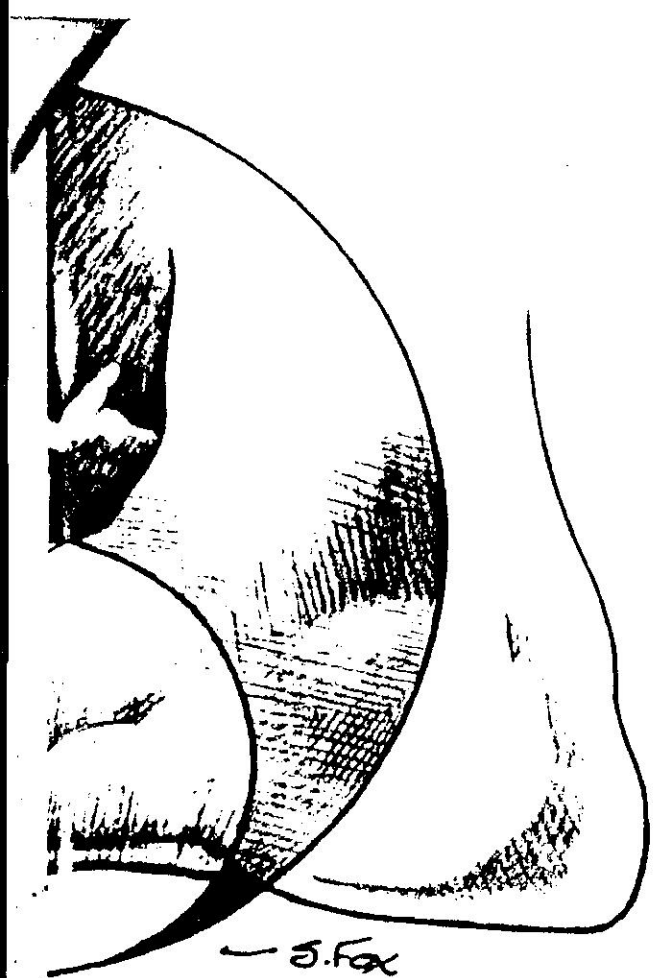
Such a philosophy should both flow from our history and reflect current practice in the field. It should be inclusive, i.e., provide the common denominator for the

many different approaches to our work. It should express our commonality, while respecting our differences.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

After observing what appears to be happening in massage therapy today, and reflecting on that in light of distant and recent history, seven common themes emerged as a possible basis for a Philosophy of Unity for the field of massage therapy. Those commonalities, as I see them, are summed up in the following seven principles.

- I. Massage therapy entails manipulation of the soft tissues of the body by the hands of a therapist.
- II. Massage therapy is concerned with the maintenance or restoration of a state of health of a person.
- III. Massage therapy aims to improve the health of the person by facilitating optimal body functioning, e.g., circulation of fluids, respiration, nerve conduction, muscle tone, and proper anatomical alignment.
- IV. Massage therapy is holistic in that it recognizes that the person is made up of body, mind and spirit; and that although massage therapy is applied directly to the body, it may also have a profound effect on the mind and spirit.
- V. The foundation of massage therapy is the knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. In addition to Western scientific knowledge, massage therapy respects other theoretical views of body functioning which are based on experiential knowledge that cannot yet be verified by scientific methods.



- VI. The massage therapist is an artist working from a particular theoretical view, who applies various manual techniques of soft tissue manipulation rationally, but with intuition and creativity, to achieve optimal body functioning.
- VII. Other modalities may be used to complement massage therapy (e.g. hydrotherapy, heat, cold, light, exercise), but they are not a definitive part of massage therapy.

These seven principles can serve as a point of unity to rally around, while serving as the departure point for particular styles of massage therapy.

As this Philosophy of Unity took shape, I was struck by the many historical parallels that can be found for the Seven Principles in the theories of Ling himself and of the early proponents of Swedish Movement-Cure and massage in this country. I believe that we are just coming out of a "lost period" in our history in which we temporarily wandered in the wilderness trying to find legitimacy in the theoretical framework of regular medicine. In doing so, massage therapy became engulfed in the broad field of physical therapy losing its identity and potency as a unique approach to health.

As the field of massage therapy emerges from that wilderness today, the apparent points of unity echo the distant past, and in particular, the theoretical framework provided by Ling in his treatise on human movement. In the next paragraphs I will make some observations about the historical aspects of this proposed Philosophy of Unity, in particular as related to the work of Pehr

Ling and the early proponents of the Swedish Movement-Cure and massage in this country.

Massage Therapy—A Universal Term for the Field

The profession needs to come to an agreement about a universally accepted term to denote the entire field. "Massage" is too closely linked in some practitioner's minds to traditional Swedish massage. "Bodywork," has had some popularity, but is already used by those who repair automobile exteriors.

An inescapable fact is that the general public in America identifies this field with the term "massage." Call it something else, and you frequently end up explaining that it's a "kind of massage." "Massage" has become a generic term for soft tissue manipulation in this country. Given that one of the characteristics of a true profession is recognition by the public, the term "massage" seems most practical for identification by the public at this point in our history.

Use of the word "massage" also gives some historical legitimacy to the field. It identifies the practice with ancient Greeks and Romans, the Turkish and Russian baths of the last century, as well as to early physio-therapy in this country and in England. Even histories of the field tend to use the word "massage" in the generic sense.

The more recent use of the term "massage therapy" keeps the familiar word "massage," but also indicates an added dimension. It separates our field from massage as a cover for prostitution, while suggesting that it is concerned with health. All things considered, massage therapy seems to me to be the best choice for the field today.

Definition of Massage Therapy

Massage therapy can be defined as manipulation of the soft tissues of the body by the hands of a therapist for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a state of health in the recipient.

The term "massage" has come to be associated with work done with the hands on the soft tissues of the body. This is probably the most basic common understanding of the term. The picture that comes to mind when the word "massage" is mentioned is of someone pressing or kneading or in some way manipulating the soft body tissues.

The term "massage" was introduced in the United States and Western Europe in the late 19th century through the work of Dr. Metzger practicing at the time in Amsterdam. Metzger called his style of soft tissue manipulations "massage," and the specific techniques he used were effleurage, massage à friction, petrissage and tapotement. There were other styles of soft tissue manipulation used at the time, most notably, those included in the Swedish Movement-Cure of Pehr Ling.

By the time Metzger's work reached America, the Swedish Movement-Cure was a well established practice. Metzger's massage technique was accepted by the proponents of the Swedish Movement-Cure as a valuable addition to their work because it had great similarity of purpose and technique. Massage fit into the theoretical framework of the Swedish Movement-Cure and became

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so identified with this approach to health through soft tissue manipulation, that eventually a new breed of work was created in this country called "Swedish massage." The term "Swedish massage" does not exist in Sweden or in any other European country to my knowledge, where it is known simply as "massage."

The term "massage" caught on as a general description of soft tissue manipulation by hand, much like the use of the terms kleenex and xerox in present times, which started out as trademarks but which are used in common language as generic terms.

THE AIM IS HEALTH

The aim of massage therapy is the maintenance or restoration of a state of health. Swedish medical gymnastics of Pehr Ling developed in the early 19th century, gave the theoretical basis for the Swedish movement-cure and, later, the early practice of massage in this country. Ling believed that a state of health depends on the equilibrium and harmony that exists in the functions of the tissues and organs of the body, and that illness occurs when this harmony is disturbed. Ling believed that harmony and balance can be maintained, or restored when lost, through both active (exercise) and passive (passive range of motion and soft tissue manipulation) movements. (Ling 1840)

Since movement was the basis of Ling's system, it was called the Swedish Movement-Cure when it was introduced in this country in the 1850's. George Taylor, writing about Ling's system in his book *An Exposition of the Swedish Movement-Cure* in 1860, explained

Movements... secure or restore unity and a just balance to the various functions, and from disorder and discord tend to bring out that blissful order and harmony which it was doubtless the intention

of the all-wise and good Creator should characterize the physical nature of his favored children. (Taylor 1880:117)

Taylor identifies the "essential phenomena" that are the chief interest of the Swedish Movement-Cure "and the control over which it is the aim of all our practice and endeavor" as "defective respiration, congestion or mal-circulation, imperfect nutrition, morbid innervation." (Taylor 1880:121) He further distinguishes between hygienic and remedial (medical) uses of movements.

Whether movements are hygienic or remedial in their effects depends on the character of the case for which they are used. They are hygienic when their influences are such as to maintain the already existing healthy relations of the physiological man—when they give healthy scope to all vital powers in spite of the deteriorating tendencies of sedentary or intellectual occupations; or of such... of labor as employ some portions of the body too much and other portions too little. Movements thus applied may be called the natural means of counteracting the evil tendencies of an artificial mode of life, whose name is legion.

Movements become medical when their effects are to improve imperfect physiological relations, or break up pathological states habitually existing; as, for instance, when they permanently increase the circulation and nutrition of a part previously defective, increase the respiration, diminish morbid innervation, restrain morbid discharges, or incite any defective function to a healthful and satisfactory play. (Taylor 1880:121-122)

Taylor uses the word "medical" in a general sense to

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mean the employment of various agents to favorably excite or control the operations of the human system. Whereas he sees the agents used by regular medicine as having a disorganizing effect on the operations of the body, he sees movements as having an organizing effect.

We must confine our researches, in pursuance of this purpose, to an investigation of the conditions of perfect health, instead of vainly searching for some wonderful specific, or panacea, or divine balsam among substances whose demonstrable effect on vitalized matter is only and forever to deteriorate and destroy. (Taylor 1880:77)

This distinction between hygienic and remedial movements has great significance for massage therapy today. It gives historical legitimacy to the position that massage therapy may be considered health and fitness oriented, as well as remedial or medical.

In either case, the focus is on the proper functioning of the body. The difference lies simply in how far the person is from perfect functioning—a difference in degree, not in kind. Massage therapy done in the health club setting is as appropriate as that done in medical setting, since both are concerned with facilitating optimal body functioning described as a state of perfect health.

MASSAGE THERAPY IS HOLISTIC

Massage therapy is holistic in that it recognizes that the human person is made up of body, mind and spirit; and that although massage therapy is applied directly to the body, it may also have a profound effect on the mind and spirit.

This holistic perspective dates at least from the time of Ling. It was lost for a time when practitioners of soft tissue manipulation embraced the medical/scientific the-

oretical perspective as more modern and when to be "scientific" meant legitimacy.

Ling spoke of the "human organism" as made up of mechanical, chemical and dynamic groundforms which must be in balance for health to exist. The dynamic basic form corresponded roughly to the workings of the nervous system, i.e., the senses, thought, temperment, emotions. He also saw the dynamical form as "mediating between the limited and the infinite;" and as the form through which "the human also becomes the most complete of all beings: the image of God according to the Bible." (Ling 1840)

Ling believed that human movement was an expression of the soul, and so balance between the body parts "increases the influence of the spiritual being on the body [being], and thus will work back on the previous [spiritual being]. (Ling 1840) Although Ling did not specifically state how the interaction of body, mind and spirit occurred, he did recognize their interrelationship.

In his 1840 treatise, Ling discusses the "psychological aspect of the groundforms;" and "the connection between the physical and the psychological." Taylor explains this belief in the influence of the mind on the body as part of the theory of the Swedish Movement-Cure:

The different states of the mind, whether in its departments of thought or feeling, are well known to exert a powerful influence upon the physiological manifestations. . . The continued indulgence of malicious feelings by a person, for example, will surely so modify all the internal invisible functional acts of his system as to check and overcome finally its vital power; and thus any latent tendencies to chronic disease that may belong to him will pretty certainly be quickened into active life. (Taylor 1880:442-3)

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Even at that time, Taylor lamented the ignorance of regular physicians regarding the connection between the body and the mind. Commenting on the almost exclusive use of drugs by physicians of the times to treat disease, Taylor said that "neither physician nor patient can afford any longer to devote his attention exclusively to the superficial and deceptive signs of disease, nor to ignore the fact, that the body is but the incarnate expression of the interior, invisible, imperishable spirit, which is the man!" (Taylor 1880:443-44)

KNOWLEDGE OF ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

The foundation of massage therapy is the knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. This principle is clearly stated by Ling.

May Anatomy... be the gymnast's [therapist's] most treasured fundamental principle; but let him contemplate these forms—not as if they were lifeless ones—but... as though they were living, not as constituting an inert mass, but the instrument of the soul, animated with the latter throughout. This requires the inseparable consort of Anatomy—Physiology. (Ling 1840)

One of the major contributions of Ling to the field of human movement was his insistence that correct movements (active and passive) be based on thorough knowledge of how the body works. But, although Ling was considered a good anatomist for his time, his knowledge of physiology was dated. Nevertheless, Ling based his theories on definite beliefs of how the human organism functioned. Accepting experiential knowledge where science was lacking, Ling in many ways came closer to the truth about the nature of what he called, "the human organism," particularly in his insistence on the unity of the person—body, mind and spirit.

The following passage from Taylor written in 1880 shows how theories based primarily on experiential knowledge and reasoning were often accepted when science could not yet explain how things worked. The following quotation contains Taylor's explanation, based on primitive knowledge of physics and chemistry, of how massage affects the function of the body. This may be considered the forerunner of today's "energy theories" of massage therapy.

None are too weak and helpless for successful treatment on the principles of Massage. For, the mechanical energy it employs may be derived from the muscle of *another individual*—an assistant, operator, or masseur—whose hands are in pressure-contact with the person of the invalid. It is perfectly feasible to transmit mechanical energy to... the living body... In the case of the living body, which is composed of a multiplicity of minute parts, it is evident that the motion thus communicated is distributed among these parts. It is also to a considerable amount disposed of for various physiological uses. It strengthens feebly performed vital processes, entering into the operations

of both assimilation and of growth, and especially into those by which organic materials are resolved into simpler and innocuous forms. (Taylor 1880:359)

In continuing this tradition of theoretical openmindedness, different styles of massage therapy may accept theories of human functioning that cannot yet be verified by scientific method because certain elements of the theory cannot be measured. The theoretical frameworks of reflexology and acupressure, two popular forms of massage therapy, fall into this category.

Although there will always be skeptics who will not believe what they see and experience themselves if they cannot get "scientific proof," the field of massage therapy would do well not to fall into that trap, and avoid the shortcomings of traditional medical science.

MASSAGE THERAPIST AS ARTIST

The massage therapist is an artist working from a particular theoretical view, who applies various manual techniques of soft tissue manipulation rationally, but with intuition and creativity, to achieve optimal body functioning. This principle suggests that the massage therapist works with intent from a particular theoretical perspective, and uses knowledge in the application of technique.

Ling commented on the need for both science (knowledge) and art (application) in the field of human movement:

True knowledge is the means by which a man both can and must fulfill his profession. But the gymnast must combine theory with practice. A gymnast who despises one or the other resembles a trembling reed in all his actions; for he knows neither when or how he should employ this or that movement. A gymnast who is thorough, but who lacks practice, resembles an art-critic who merely possesses knowledge and who is unable to carry out practically what he knows. (Ling 1840)

Early in this century, Dr. Emil Kleen gives his views on training to develop the "artistic" side of massage:

Further, it is a great advantage to watch or help a skilled masseur for some time. One thus acquires the technique more easily and surely than in any other way, and, besides, gains more quickly knowledge which belongs especially to the masseur and can only be slowly obtained from one's own experience. I would emphasize, on the other hand, that it is never worthwhile to follow slavishly a definite example in technique, but everyone must work out his own method, which soon becomes as individual as his own handwriting. (Kleen 1921:22-23)

In describing the "true massage operator, R. Tait McKenzie notes that besides "muscular strength, a certain manual dexterity, and good will" a successful massage operator needs an "intimate and special knowledge of anatomy."

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In addition to this, there must be that touch, firm, insistent yet gentle that adapts itself to the hills and hollows of the body surface, as if by instinct... (McKenzie 1915:337-338)

OTHER MODALITIES

Other modalities may be used to complement massage therapy, but they are not a definitive part of massage therapy. In various styles of soft tissue manipulation, other modalities have sometimes been used to a greater or lesser degree, but the thing which is unique and constant is the predominant use of the hands.

Active Movements. The inclusion of exercise (active movements) along with massage has an interesting history. It stems directly from the Swedish medical gymnastics of Pehr Ling which used both active and passive movements to bring harmony to the human person. Interestingly, the massage treatment introduced by Metzger of Germany did not include any active movements. But when that peculiar American hybrid, Swedish massage, emerged in the early 20th century, active movements remained, but in a minor role.

The term "mechanotherapy" was used at the turn-of-the-century to describe the practice of treating disease by both massage and active movements. It was considered a more modern term than either medical gymnastics or movement-cure.

Active movements used alone to improve health conditions as a primary modality continued to be taught in schools of physical education, as corrective exercise and kinesiotherapy. Programs for kinesiotherapy exist to this day in some schools of physical education, with graduates working primarily in veterans hospitals.

Massage Machines. In the late 19th century, machines were devised to administer massage technique. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing and the nation was enthralled with machines and mechanical power.

Dr. Gustaf Zander, a Swede, developed a system known as the medico-mechanical method in which machines were designed to replace people in administering Ling's movements. He designed machines for active movements including resistance exercise, some for special massage effects (e.g. hacking, kneading, stroking, vibration), some for giving corrective pressure, and three for examining lateral curvatures of the spine. He based his method on the belief that machines were more efficient in producing mechanical effects.

Dr. George Taylor of New York, probably borrowing from Zander, developed his own line of machines in this country. He wrote about them in the medical journals of the 1880's. Dr. J. G. Trine's Movement Cure Institute in Chicago boasted of Steam-propelled mechanisms of "great variety of form, capable of applying vibrations, rubbings, kneading, oscillations, etc., with most agree-

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able and remarkable effects."

A few hospitals had large rooms filled with these machines, the latest technological advances in medical care. The machines required large spaces, and could only perform one function each. They were not space and cost effective and eventually died out.

Historically, there is precedent for the use of machines in massage therapy. But the use of a machine alone would not be considered true massage therapy. Even Dr. Trine emphasized that "It is not the design of the mechanical operations in any way to supercede those applied by hand, but to give this treatment greater extent, efficacy and perfection... Treatment applied by hand, and that by the mechanical apparatus, are not in opposition, but in harmony."

Physio-therapy. The term physio-therapy also appeared in the later 19th century as other drugless therapies were combined with massage and corrective exercise, e.g., light, heat, cold, water. This combination of modalities characterizes physical therapy today, frequently with the massage portion of the treatment sorely neglected.

It is understandable why the Swedish-style massage therapy, with its history so closely identified with physio-therapy, continues to consider other modalities as important adjuncts. But other styles of massage therapy (e.g. Metzger's massage of the past, and reflexology and

acupressure today) do not consider additional modalities essential to their practice. Therefore, from a universal point of view which reflects practice today, as well as the past, other modalities should not be considered essential to massage therapy in the universal sense.

CONCLUSION

Acceptance of the Seven Principles of the Philosophy of Unity as defining massage therapy would give the field a common focus and point of unity. I believe that it is a true reflection of what is happening in the field today, and it is based firmly in history.

It is not a sudden departure from the historical progression to define the field from a broader perspective. What is amazing too is how one particular style of massage therapy, Swedish massage, got to be the center of the universe for a time, itself being a recent hybrid of styles. By regaining our history, we recapture a truer view of the field.

With massage therapy broadly defined according to the Seven Principles, the question "But should it be considered massage?" is more easily answered. Swedish massage, with its ambiguous identity, is no longer the standard of measure. It becomes only one of the many styles of massage therapy, along with reflexology, acupres-

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sure, trigger point therapy, sportsmassage, and many other styles of manual therapy aimed at health and healing of the human person.

Massage therapy has a long and respected history as a health and healing profession in this country. For a time, it seems that we lost the underpinning that a universally accepted philosophy can offer. In these years of renewed interest and tremendous growth in the field, it is important that we redefine ourselves and regain a strong identity. These Seven Principles of the Philosophy of Unity can serve as a starting point for further discussion of the theoretical basis of our field—for we are truly more alike than different. □

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